



Town of Walpole

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PERSONNEL BOARD

Michael McGrath, Chair
Julie Lowre, Vice-Chair
Jane Bergen
Larry Pitman
Jon Rockwood

Town Hall
135 School Street
Walpole, MA 02081
Phone (508)-660-7292
Fax (508)-660-7303

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 10, 2020

The Personnel Board met on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 beginning at 6:00pm via Zoom. The following members were present:

Michael McGrath, Chair
Jane Bergen
Larry Pitman
Jon Rockwood

Julie Lowre, Vice Chair (NOT PRESENT)

Also Present:
Jim Johnson, Town Administrator
Patrick Shield, Assistant Town Administrator
Kristine Brown, Benefits Coordinator

Agenda Items:

CALL TO ORDER:

Mr. McGrath called the Personnel Meeting to order at 6:04pm

UPDATE FROM TOWN ADMINISTRATION

Assistant Town Administrator Patrick Shield explained that the Fall Town Meeting was held on October 17th. Town Meeting approved the 2% cost of living increase that the Personnel Board approved previously. We are trying to start the FY22 budget. We are asking departments to get in their numbers so we can start the process. This way the departments can start building their budgets. Some of our comparable Towns are not in the same stable position that Walpole currently is. According to the memo that Jim provided to the Board, the average cost of living increase is 1.8%. Typically the Town Administrator gives his opinion on what he feels the cost of living increase should be but we wanted to have this conversation with the Personnel Board first.

DISCUSSION ABOUT FY22 WAGE INCREASE:

Mr. Pitman questioned why Jim used the unions as reference points. Those contracts are negotiated by collective bargaining.

Mr. Shield explained that we are trying to maintain the same increase and provide the same level of comparability among the working groups.

Mr. Pitman felt that the union wages are at a lower salary scale than the management team. He felt that the management team is already well compensated. He wanted to know how we continue to afford both the step increase (1-3%) and the cost of living increase (1.75%).

Ms. Bergen felt what was provided was a good basis of comparison. The average seems to be 1.79% based on the Towns that have responded

Town Administrator Jim Johnson stated that he was looking for some guidance from the Board. Last time we met the Board did not want to lock in the non-union COLA numbers for 3 years like the union does. Every year this is an issue. This Board wanted to do this yearly. I would like to know how you feel. We are comparing union with non-union because that is how it has always been done. I am trying to set the budget. What number would the Board be comfortable with going forward? I think it is tough to justify a 2% COLA. What is your general thought...1%...1.5%?

Mr. Pitman stated that it's not just the COLA but the Steps as well.

Mr. Shield stated that the purpose of the steps and COLA are different. One is merit based performance and one is to maintain good employees and cover cost of living expenses.

Ms. Bergen suggested 1.8% since it is following what the other towns are doing?

Mr. Johnson suggested rounding it to 1.75%

Mr. McGrath felt that was fair. We would come just a hair above the average but less than 2% which shows we are being cautious.

Ms. Bergen felt that was a very reasonable number especially with the way the world is right now.

Mr. Pitman wanted to know what if the State budget cuts funding to Walpole.

Mr. Johnson explained that the Board can certainly revisit this. If things get really bad, I would plan for a 0% increase before I laid employees off.

Mr. Pitman stated that he is not comfortable with an increase during these volatile times. He would rather wait to see how Walpole fares under the FY 21 state budget.

Mr. Rockwood stated in his opinion as a group we should expect fiscal discipline. We are seeing that in Jim's approach. To hit this small group of employees isn't fair. It is a pragmatic & conservative approach.

Mr. McGrath stated that he felt confident that 1.75 is the best number for us.

Motion moved by Mr. Rockwood to approve the 1.75% cost of living increase, seconded by Ms. Bergen

Roll call vote:

Mike McGrath: YES

Jane Bergen: YES

Larry Pitman: NO

Jon Rockwood: YES

Vote 3-1-0 Approved

REVIEW OF ASSISTANT TREASURER/COLLECTOR JOB DESCRIPTION:

The Assistant Treasurer/Collectors job description was discussed.

Mr. Shield explained that Jodi Cuneo has been promoted to Finance Director, Lisa Sinkus has been promoted to Treasurer/Collector and Joan DeCosta has stepped into the role of Assistant Treasurer/Collector. We had to revise the job description based on the change in the department.

Ms. Bergen stated she did not have any questions, as everything seemed straightforward.

Mr. Shield said that we are lucky to have Joan and a strong financial team.

Motion moved by Ms. Bergen to approve the Assistant Treasurer/Collector position as presented, seconded by Mr. Rockwood.

Roll call vote:

Mike McGrath: YES

Jane Bergen: YES

Larry Pitman: YES

Jon Rockwood: YES

Vote 4-0-0 Approved

APPROVAL OF PERSONNEL ACTION REQUESTS:

The PAR's were reviewed.

Ms. Bergen wanted to know if the Election Officers just worked for the Town on Election Day.

Mr. Shield stated yes and that they will remain in the system for upcoming elections.

Mr. Pitman questioned why Val Donohue was on the PAR chart.

Patrick explained that she is not a contractual employee therefore she is still subject to the same increases. She works part-time (15 hours per week) and does not receive any benefits. She is working on an as-needed basis. Town Administrator Jim Johnson and Val will review the situation on an annual basis.

Mr. Pitman wanted to know if there was a plan to hire a full time Human Resources Director.

Mr. Shield explained that they would eventually hire a replacement but they are trying to tighten the belt as much as possible. Val has many years of experience

Motion moved by Mr. Rockwood to approve the PAR's and allow Mr. Shield to sign on the Board's behalf, seconded by Ms. Bergen

Roll call vote:

Mike McGrath: YES

Jane Bergen: YES

Larry Pitman: YES

Jon Rockwood: YES

Vote 4-0-0 Approved

MINUTES:

a. Approval of Minutes from September 29, 2020

The minutes of 9/29 were reviewed; Mr. Pitman noted that during that meeting there was a discussion about an organizational chart. He questioned if this was created.

Mr. Shield noted that he will update that for the Board and have it ready for the next meeting.

Motion moved by Ms. Bergen to approve the September 29, 2020 minutes as written, seconded by Mr. Pitman

Roll call vote:

Mike McGrath: YES

Jane Bergen: YES

Larry Pitman: YES

Jon Rockwood: YES

Vote 4-0-0 Approved

The Board agreed to meet again on December 8, 2020

ADJOURNMENT:

With there being nothing else to discuss

Motion moved by Mr. Pitman to adjourn the Personnel Board meeting at 6:44pm, seconded by Mr. Rockwood.

Roll call vote:

Mike McGrath: YES

Jane Bergen: YES

Larry Pitman: YES

Jon Rockwood: YES

Vote 4-0-0 Approved

Respectfully submitted,

Kristine Brown

Minutes approved on: **February 9, 2021**